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Request for the inclusion of a supplementary item in the agenda of the sixty-first session

International Year of Reconciliation, 2009

Letter dated 4 August 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Nicaragua to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request, pursuant to rule 14 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-first session of a supplementary item entitled "International Year of Reconciliation, 2009".

Pursuant to rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I attach an explanatory memorandum, which highlights the importance of this topic and the need for its careful examination by the General Assembly of the United Nations (see annex I), together with a draft resolution (see annex II).

In the light of the special significance of the proposed item, which is related to numerous aspects of the work of the General Assembly, I should also like to request that the item be examined directly in plenary session, rather than being referred to one of the Main Committees.

(*Signed*) Mario H. **Castellon Duarte**
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Annex I

International Year of Reconciliation, 2009

1. Rationale

It has become a tradition in the international community to dedicate each year to a particular issue or cause with the aim of raising public awareness about the matter.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) appealed to the United Nations to proclaim 1995 as the International Year of Tolerance; the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed and received the support of the international community for the proclamation of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations; UNESCO once again gained the support of the General Assembly of the United Nations for the proclamation of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace; and a group of Nobel Peace Prize laureates, including Nelson Mandela and Rigoberta Menchú, supported by UNESCO, sought and achieved the proclamation of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010. In September 2005, the General Assembly received midterm reports from more than 600 civil society organizations on progress under the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, encouraging the strengthening and expansion of activities aimed at building a culture of peace in the world, especially in the remaining five years of the decade.

Mainline Christian churches have undertaken important initiatives in the area of reconciliation among religions. Examples include the organization by the Roman Catholic church of an interreligious meeting of representatives of the Jewish, Islamic and Christian faiths in Jerusalem in 2000. When the World Council of Churches celebrated its "Jubilee Anniversary" in 1998, marking the 50th anniversary of its creation, it welcomed and expressed support for many initiatives of this type. And in 2001, the Council launched the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace, 2001-2010.

We understand reconciliation to be a profound process of coming together by parties in conflict, a process which leads to the recognition of the Other in their differences, interests and values and which entails the repair of the damage or the injustice that caused the rupture in the society or between the nations in question. Reconciliation also implies the creation of institutions capable of establishing a new type of relationship, as well as the promotion of a new culture that will ensure the irreversibility of peace.

This proposal aims to foster the creation in the world of an enabling environment for reconciliation activities and initiatives at the various levels of human society: between States; between Governments and their citizens; between religions; between the North and the South; between cultures, genders, ethnic groups, generations and individuals; and between humans and the environment.

The proposal seeks to bring to bear the attention, thoughts, feelings and actions of men and women, both within and outside power structures, to achieve a favourable climate for concrete action that will make reconciliation processes a reality.

We believe that this first decade of the new century and millennium, with its heavy burden of violence and despair, is a signal moment and a propitious one to put forward such an initiative. Indeed, humanity is yearning for new signs of hope heralding a fundamental change in the direction of the events that we are witnessing today.

From the perspective of a country such as mine, in a region such as Central America, which endured long years of armed conflict that had a severe impact on all social relationships, reconciliation is a necessity and an essential condition for building a firm and lasting peace.

Many countries and regions of the world have lived through and are continuing to live through situations of conflict, marked by varying degrees of violence, which have created clashes and schisms in societies at various levels: internally, nationally and internationally. At the same time, a rupture has occurred in the relationship between man and nature. Reconciliation is thus necessary and urgent.

2. Actions to be promoted

While an infinite number of actions might be promoted, and any action taken will have to be adapted to the realities of each society, we should like to suggest, by way of example, the following possible initiatives:

Between Governments and citizens: amnesty for political prisoners, programmes to eradicate critical poverty.

Between States in conflict: measures to foster trust, ceasefires, negotiations and other means of settlement, lifting of sanctions, embargoes, etc.

Between genders: programmes to eradicate violence against and promote equal rights for women.

Between generations: programmes to promote respect for and recognition of the rights and specific needs of children and young people and of older persons.

Between humans and nature: promotion through educational systems and the communications media of environmental education and activities to encourage environmental conservation and the development of ecological awareness.

Between the North and the South: initiatives for total or partial forgiveness by the countries of the North of the debt of the poorest and least developed countries of the South.

Between religions, ethnic groups and cultures: systematic programmes aimed at promoting tolerance, dialogue, knowledge, exchange and understanding between different groups, and reparation for the injustice that indigenous peoples have suffered in relation to their lands and cultures.

The proclamation of 2009 as the International Year of Reconciliation will afford great opportunities for Governments, governmental and non-governmental organizations and all of civil society to plan and carry out cultural, educational, social and even political programmes in order to bring about true reconciliation between parties in conflict.

The United Nations, as a multidisciplinary forum and focal point that brings together the efforts of all countries, is in a position to play a major role in achieving common objectives through the activities undertaken during the International Year of Reconciliation, 2009.

Annex II

Draft Resolution

International Year of Reconciliation, 2009

The General Assembly,

Bearing in mind the Charter of the United Nations, including the purposes and principles contained therein, and in particular those of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, bringing about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to the breach of the peace, and practicing tolerance and living together in peace with one another as good neighbours, thus developing friendly relations among nations and promoting international cooperation to resolve international economic, social, cultural and humanitarian issues,

Recognizing that reconciliation processes are particularly necessary and urgent in countries and regions of the world that have suffered or are suffering situations of armed, social, cultural, economic or other conflicts that have affected and divided societies in their various internal, national and international facets,

Recognizing that many of the activities of the United Nations system in general and the international community as a whole to support peacekeeping and peacebuilding, conflict prevention, disarmament, sustainable development, the promotion and protection of human rights and dignity, democracy, the rule of law and governance, inter alia, lead to the initiation and development of reconciliation processes,

Aware that dialogue among opponents from positions of respect and tolerance is an essential element of peace and reconciliation,

Bearing in mind the active and committed role that the media should play in reconciliation processes,

Convinced that the declaration of an International Year of Reconciliation at the beginning of the first decade of the new Millennium will provide the international community with the opportunity to pursue, with the active involvement of all stakeholders, efforts to develop reconciliation processes, which are necessary to and a condition for the establishment of firm and lasting peace,

1. *Expresses* its steadfast determination to pursue reconciliation processes in those societies that are affected and/or divided by armed, economic, social or cultural conflicts;

2. *Decides* to proclaim 2009 the International Year of Reconciliation;

3. *Invites* concerned Governments and international and non-governmental organizations to support reconciliation processes among affected and/or divided societies and to plan and implement adequate cultural, educational and social programmes to promote the concept of reconciliation, including holding conferences and seminars and disseminating information about the issue, and to inform the Secretary-General of their respective activities;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to prepare a preliminary report for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-second session and a final report for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.